

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
of the
Suffolk County Legislature

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Health & Human Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge, New York, **on March 18, 2004**, at 9:30 A.M.

Members Present:

Legislator Paul Tonna - Chairman

Legislator Lynne Nowick - Vice-Chair

Legislator Brian Foley.

Legislator Daniel Losquadro

Legislator Ricardo Montano

Legislator Jay Schneiderman

Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher

Also in Attendance:

Mea Knapp - Counsel to the Legislature

Ilona Julius - Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature

Ron Cohen - Aide to Legislator Tonna

Jim Spero - Director/Budget Review Office

Dan Hickey - Aide to Presiding Officer Caracappa

Linda Bay - Aide to Presiding Officer Caracappa

Priscilla Smith - Aide to Legislator Crecca

Ivan Young - County Executive's Office/IR

Dr. Linda Mermelstein - Acting Commissioner/Dept of Health Services

Len Marchese - Finance Division/Department of Health Services

Janet DeMarzo - Commissioner/Department of Social Services.

Traci Barnes - Assistant Commissioner/Department of Social Services

Linda O'Donohoe - Asst to the Commissioner/Dept of Social Services

Margaret Beringer - Foster Care/Department of Social Services

Rosalba Sullivan - Department of Social Services

Kathleen Taylor - Foster Care/Department of Social Services

Nancy Fay - Foster Care/Department of Social Services

Ellen Brady - Child Protective Services/Dept of Social Services

Marybeth Westfall - Child Protective Services/Dept of Social Services.

Cheryl Felice - President/AME

Lydia Sabosto - AME

Sondra Palmer Randall - Secretary/AME

William Stoner - American Cancer Society.

Kathy Ayers-Lanzillotta - The Quality Consortium

All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken By:

Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

(*The meeting was called to order at 9:41 A.M.*)

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Would everyone please rise for a Pledge of Allegiance led by our Legal Counsel.

Salutation

Please be seated. Who would have thought that you would see snow this late in March. I thought it was interesting when one of my little ones said to me today, "I thought it was supposed to go in like a lion and out like a lamb." Anyway, that's probably telling of this committee. Let's start with -- we have some cards. Nancy, did you fill out a card?

MS. MARIANO:

No.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

No? I think just technically, if I'm not mistaken, you need to fill out a card, you can fill it out later, but come on and make your presentation. Start with name, rank, serial number for the record and then we'll go from there. Ilona, you'll be able to get her a card or something? Thank

you.

MS. MARIANO:

Thank you for inviting me here, it's really important. Friends of Karen, the organization has been around for 25 years and I'm sure many of you that are in this room never heard about us. And what we do is we provide financial and emotional support to families who have children with life threatening illnesses, we actually pay the bills. It started in -- everyone always asks who Karen is, she was from Westchester 25 years ago dying in a hospital and wanted to come home but there was no money to be able to provide the services at home; money was raised and Karen spent the last eleven months at home. And after she passed away, with the money left over the non-profit started because we started helping other children in that area and it spread quickly to Long Island, northern New Jersey and Fairfield, Connecticut.

On the average, we help over 600 families a year and the Long Island office was opened just two years ago because we found that one-third of the families that had children with life threatening illnesses and couldn't afford their bills and were just really going under were coming from Long Island. We help families that have children from birth to 21 years and the problems that some of these families have, I mean, you can imagine, there's nothing worse than a child with a life threatening illness and there's nothing worse than a family that has to watch the day-to-day suffering. And then put on top of that maybe a single mom who thinks she just has it together and she got a job, bought a car and the child comes down with a disease like cancer and everything ends; she can't pay her mortgage, she can't pay her rent or her car payment, she take even care of the other children because she's in a hospital setting taking care of her sick child where she should be. But Friends of Karen makes sure that doesn't happen, and whether it means paying the mortgage, paying transportation, paying for child care, we pay for every burial; last year we lost 59 children.

We pay for back to school. When a family has a child that's so sick they forget that it's back to school time, the other children may need stuff or it's a holiday season. This past holiday season over \$98,000 worth of stuff went to our families to make sure that none of the children in the family were forgotten because there was a sick child.

And the reason I'm here is so many people don't know the work that we do because what traditionally happens, when a child is so ill in the hospital the social workers in the hospital will call our social workers, we have a staff of our own social workers and then there's a whole intake system and that's how the program starts. But for the public at large, it seems many people do

not know about Friends of Karen and the work that we do is so important that I wanted you to be able to know of it so if there's any family in your communities they could take advantage of our services. And also try to find a way of our budget that's close to almost \$2 million, if there was any way that we could get support from the County in the services that we do.

It's not about a disease, there's no limitation of the time or the money that we spend. We just started a full pre and post bereavement program where we have monthly bereavement and a summer retreat for families and their children that have gone through this. And the main reason we're in business is to make sure that if there's a family that has a child with a life threatening illness, if they receive emotional and financial support they'll have more time to love their child, that's what we do.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Nancy, if you could just for the record tell them your name and stuff like that.

MS. MARIANO:

My name is Nancy Mariano and I'm the Regional Director of Friends of Karen.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Any questions? Sure.

LEG. NOWICK:

Hi. I applaud you on what you're doing, Nancy. You said you have a budget of \$2 million?

MS. MARIANO:

Uh-huh.

LEG. NOWICK:

That money is all raised through fund-raisers and donations?

MS. MARIANO:

Fund-raising, donation, grants, proposals, end of year appeals, those type of things.

LEG. NOWICK:

That's incredible.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

They have a great golf outing over at Meadowbrook.

LEG. NOWICK:

I see that, May 3rd.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Yes. We've --

LEG. NOWICK:

Only you can play Meadowbrook, I can't.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Well, not only I. But still, we had a great time, it was the first annual last year, we raised -- how much money was raised?

MS. MARIANO:

We cleared over 80,000 for that.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

The generosity of people, it's amazing.

MS. MARIANO:

Most of the time when I sit across from anyone and tell the work that we do, there's no fluff, it's important stuff.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Right. The one thing that I find unique is that this is an organization that really responded to a grassroots need and didn't look for government to basically say, you know, we can only exist if government is there. They went out and they did it on their own and now I think the needs are expanding so much so that maybe we can offer some assistance. But clearly, a lot of our not-for-profits, we've talked about the idea of having their own fund-raising activities and that that should be a part, they shouldn't be completely dependent upon government. This really comes

at the exact opposite which is that this is an organization that has -- as a matter of fact, I think you received a check from Donald Trump the other day and he forgot to sign it, right?

MS. MARIANO:

Right.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

So he might be out in the next show.

MS. MARIANO:

He's gone. That's a true story.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

He's fired?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Yeah, you're fired.

MS. MARIANO:

We were so excited to see the check and it's unsigned.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

I think maybe you could use that as a fund-raiser in and of itself and just say to him that he has to double the amount now or it's going to become public.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

It would be better if it was signed and blank.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Yeah, right, exactly.

MS. MARIANO:

See if we could add a couple of more zeroes before we mailed it back.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Yeah, right. Anyway, but it just goes to show the outreach and the hard work that Nancy and people like Nancy have put in this Friends of Karen. So thank you.

MS. MARIANO:

Thank you for the opportunity. Thank you.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

I just wanted to say that there's very little that goes to administrative costs in this program, that most of the money that you collect goes to the families.

MS. MARIANO:

Eighty-seven percent.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

That's pretty good.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

So Nancy is just tremendous, she's everywhere and that's why we have come to know her because you have worked so hard. You do a great job, Nancy.

MS. MARIANO:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you, Nancy.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

May I?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Sure.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Nancy, the \$2 million, is that spread out over both Suffolk and Nassau?

MS. MARIANO:

That is the total budget.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

That's the total budget --

MS. MARIANO:

But one-third of our services are right here on Long Island. I don't have the exact numbers for Suffolk County because what happens many times is our families are from Suffolk, that doesn't mean that they're not going to Sloan Kettering or to a hospital, St. Jude's which we also take care of. We will actually put up a family, fly them to wherever they have to go and take care of their mortgage here so they don't lose their house while they're spending six months somewhere else.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Your assistance is available throughout Long Island?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

The New York metropolitan area really.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

So if I have a constituent in a situation that might require your assistance, I just have them call or I call and let you know?

MS. MARIANO:

Yes.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Great. And again, there's some material in there I'm sure if anybody -- to attend any of their fundraising events, you get a better sense talking with some of the families and things like that which might be worth while just to get a kind of real sense of what's going on.

MS. MARIANO:

If I may, I just want to share just so you see all the stuff we do.

We were just on Shame On You the day before Thanksgiving, not because of anything we did wrong but because of a housing situation where we had a boy that had Lou Gherig's Disease, which is unusual for a young child to get. And he was living on a second floor in the Bronx with a single mom and after the hospital couldn't do any more for him they put him in a rehab center, so now he's in a rehab center with two other children that had motorcycle accidents and Mom who stays there 24/7, she's not going to leave his side. Lou Gehrig's Disease in a child is very, very progressive; diagnosed in April, by the end of the summer he's on a bed car respirator.

So Newsweek Magazine is doing a story on Friends of Karen and when they heard of this they wanted to interview Javier, the child that's ill, and they couldn't believe that we couldn't get him ground floor housing because he can't get on the second floor if he's on a bed car, he can't be in a wheel chair. So Newsweek, with some of their pull, got us some vouchers from the Housing Authority in New York, and unfortunately none of the landlords, the seven landlords we approached would accept it because they would have to wait for two years to get paid. So at this point, our social workers just couldn't deal with this anymore and we were on Shame On You with Javier, with Friends of Karen, and low and behold the next morning we had housing. So that's some of the things that we do, it's not just about paying bills.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

If any Legislators have any -- I know we were able to support I think about a thousand dollars, but if anybody has any left over money, you know, in your contingency, it might be a good -- contract money, it might be a good worth while cause to advocate. Thank you.

Thank you again, Nancy, and thank you for the great work that your organization does.

MS. MARIANO:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. I have a couple of cards and then -- Nancy Fay? Hi Nancy, come on up.

MS. FAY:

How are you?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Very good, thank you. Oh, they are; they're all with Kathleen Taylor? Okay. All right, so you can all come on up if you want. I have Kathleen -- I have you on our agenda already, okay. And just if you can identify yourselves for the record.

MS. TAYLOR:

Basically we've been trying to get an upgrade for Clerk Typists which I understand has never been done before and we're finding the process very lengthy and we're trying to get a little awareness and your attention to tell you a little bit about the Clerk Typists of Suffolk County DSS, specifically the Foster Care and the CPS people.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Uh-huh.

MS. TAYLOR:

And at this point I would like to turn it over to Margaret Beringer who happens to be my boss and who started the movement.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay.

MS. TAYLOR:

And she is a supervisor.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. Hi. How are you?

MS. BERINGER:

Hi. I'm fine, thank you. Nervous a little bit and finding it hard to follow this wonderful lady and all her worth while doings. I'm Margaret Beringer and I'm a Casework Supervisor in Foster Care for Suffolk County. Do you want Nancy to identify herself?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Sure, go ahead.

MS. FAY:

I'm Nancy Fay. Is it on?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Yep, it's on.

MS. FAY:

I'm a Clerk Typist for Foster Care.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay, great. All right, so you want to start us off?

MS. BERINGER:

Sure.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you.

MS. BERINGER:

First of all, we, too, want to thank you for your time and for your attention. We're here basically to ask your support for a title change for Clerk Typists and Senior Clerk Typists in Suffolk County's Family & Children's Services. Along with the title change, we're asking for them to be upgraded from Grade 9 to Grade 11 for the Clerk Typists and for Senior Clerk Typists to be upgraded from Grade 12 to Grade 13.

I'm a Supervisor and I began working with clerical staff seeking an upgrade about a year-and-a-half ago after seeing our administration lose several wonderful Clerk Typists and after actually experiencing it firsthand in my own unit and seeing what a disruptive thing it was to the functioning of our unit. In November of last year we actually sent in a proposal asking for an across the board upgrade for Clerk Typists. The Commissioner, however, was not able to support the proposal because she said that although Clerk Typists are essential members of the department's staff, she was not able to determine if the request was justifiable based solely on our submission without considering the work done in all divisions, she said that each division has

unique responsibilities. And although we were disappointed, after looking further into the responsibilities of other clericals in the division, we actually realized that she was correct.

The job of a Clerk Typist in Family & Children Services we believe is much more demanding than it is in other divisions. That's why we're here now seeking a change in title instead of an across the board upgrade. I'm not here in support of any one individual, I'm here because I know that getting this change in title and the upgrade would give the clericals an incentive to stay with DSS and I know how critically, critically important their services are to the functioning of our Family and Children's Division. Actually, many of the individuals that I started working with about a year-and-a-half ago have already left the agency for higher paying jobs. In fact, just recently two more of our best, most relied on Clerk Typists have received canvas letters and have responded to them.

(*Legislator Foley entered the meeting at 9:56 A.M. *)

It takes a great deal of time to learn the programs, policy, New York State regulations and agency procedures and to develop the communication skills needed for this job. An experienced Clerk Typist is more like an office manager than a clerical and case workers and supervisors alike rely on them. They are also teachers and mentors for new staff. When we lose a clerical it is a great loss to the functioning of our department.

In Suffolk County there are 966 children in Foster Care and 238 children being home supervised. In addition, the last figures that I can find show that DSS receives over 8,800 CPS intake reports a year and these reports involve 11,000 children. The caseworkers working for Suffolk County work diligently to try to protect these children and reunite the families where possible and find permanency for other children when that's not possible. But there never seems to be enough hours in the day, and this is where our Clerk Typists and Senior Clerk Typists serve as an absolutely essential support system to the frontline caseworkers and supervisors.

The Clerk Typists work extensively on the computer. They work in Excel, Legacy, Word Connections and their responsibilities are great. They input all data used to create caseload lists and track our foster children. All funding to the agency from New York State is dependent on the accuracy of the reports compiled from data inputted into the database by Clerk Typists. Caseworkers and supervisors are not trained in the database and in fact we don't know how to use it. Our Clerk Typists also do the TNA's which generate the salaries for our own staff. These

Clerk Typists, doing all of this computer work, are the same grade and get paid the same salary as Clerks who do no typing and do no computer work.

Our Clerk Typists and Senior Clerk Typists, also a very important part of what they do is that they are the first contact any clients have with our agency. We deal with emergencies constantly. The Clerk Typists have to be extremely knowledgeable about our agency's services, policies, procedures, regulations in order to properly direct these calls in a manner that is correct and gets them to the right person as soon as possible.

When a Clerk typist leaves her position in Family & Children Services, there is a major negative impact not only on the units she worked in but other units as well who most now share their clerical. It is costly to Suffolk County because then higher paid staff have to take on clerical duties and more importantly it affects services being rendered. Of course, every time a new employee is hired it costs money and time to train the employees.

I now would like to pass you over to Nancy who is a Clerk Typist and she'll be able to tell you more from her own point of view.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you. Margaret, for somebody who was nervous, you did an excellent job.

MS. BERINGER:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

I want you to know, okay?

MS. BERINGER:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Nancy, are you a little nervous?

MS. FAY:

Very.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. Well, all you have to do is look at how much hair I have on my head and you shouldn't have to worry about it at all. Take your time.

MS. FAY:

First of all, I am a Clerk Typist for the Foster Care -- is it on?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Up a little ways. There you go.

MS. FAY:

I didn't think it was on before. I am a Clerk Typist for the Foster Care Administration, I work for the Director and the Assistant Directors. And now I'm going to have to read.

The clerical staff within Family & Children Services perform duties that are far beyond the scope of the job description. As an example, the clerical job description refers to entering simple data and operating simple office equipment; in actuality, we enter complex and detailed information to all databases and spreadsheets and many times we may be called upon to compose and compile the data we have to also enter. Some of the computer applications we must know for our job are Word, Excel, Access, Outlook Connection, and our newest, the FCSA database. This database is a complex system which is crucial to the department. They rely on this information to track changes in the children's status and the accuracy of the data is essential as it is used by New York State in estimating future funding for DSS.

Caseload lists and monthly and yearly reports are established from this database. Caseworkers, supervisors and administration rely on this information on a daily basis and must obtain this information from the clericals since they are not familiar with the program and cannot access the information themselves. In fact, the training manual for our new database system which we rely on daily was written by one of our own clerical staff which I have here.

The clerical job description states we are to answer routine questions in response to telephone inquiries; however, there is nothing routine in Child Protective Services. We answer a large volume of calls and the clerical are often the first line of communication with clients, lawyers, doctors, foster parents and other agencies. The Clerk Typists must deal with people who have

serious and sensitive situations; she must be able to assess the situation, recognize an emergency and appropriately direct the call. In order to do this, we must have good knowledge of the office procedures and definition of many medical and legal terms. Clerk Typists often deal with the upset clients, confused parties and individuals who are hostile or under the influence of substance abuse and must deal with verbal abuse in a calm and professional manner. It is extremely important for the clerical to be aware of what information we can or cannot give out to the callers.

These are two examples of where I believe clerical go beyond their job description. If I was to give you details of all our duties I would bore you to tears and keep you here for days; if I haven't done that already. I would like to just list some of the --

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

No, you haven't done that.

MS. FAY:

I would like to just list some other clerical duties without going into detail of each one. Before I list them, it is important to let you know that clerical are often expected to double-team, which is they take on two teams, due to the shortage of clerical; this can last months or longer until clerical positions are filled.

Okay, some of our other responsibilities are doing teen aid for the workers with some clericals doing them for over 20 caseworkers, maintain in and out logs; TPR and legally freed children logs; transportation logs; foster home recertification logs; copy record logs; CPS intake logs; Homesafe, Homebase logs, etcetera; prepare weekly overtime reports to submit to administration and teach new employees the procedure for correctly filling out the overtime slips and other paperwork; schedule meetings for Directors, Assistant Directors and Supervisors; create templates; set up training for all staff; prepare payroll cap forms for new employees or any movement within the agency; process travel expense vouchers so workers can get reimbursed; copy records for court; maintain the copy and fax machines; sort and redirect mail; reserve room for visits; locate and advise caseworkers or community service workers if there are any changes or cancellations in visitation times; prepare reports, letters, memos and spreadsheets; order office supplies, manage the food pantry; prepare and update phone lists; archive and retrieve records; distributing 906 Forms correctly so payment can be made to foster parents and service agencies. This is just a small example of what Family & Children Services

clerical are responsible for.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the agency has a high turnover of clerical staff. We receive many canvas letters which post annual salaries that are greater than our salary even after having worked here for several years. Just this month Amityville School District sent out a canvas letter, which I have, where with a starting salary of 29,585; this is more than money than I make after being with the County for five years. Many of us enjoy the challenge of our job and would like to stay, but unfortunately most of us are unable to turn down the opportunity to make more money. Do you remember the clerical I told you about who wrote this manual? She left Family & Children Services on January 2nd of this year for a better opportunity; her knowledge and experience will be greatly missed. And I thank you very much for listening to that.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you. That was very well done.

MS. FAY:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Very well thought out. Thank you. Thank you, Nancy.

Okay, we might have some questions. Do you have anything that you want to add?

MS. TAYLOR:

Basically that DSS Foster Care/CPS is in the part of the age of information. We are no longer your date-stamping, ladies stamping in the mail, we are heavily involved not only in the technical distribution of this work but also we're on almost a first name basis with the clients that we serve --

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Right.

MS. TAYLOR:

-- and their protectors at agencies and hospitals, even police stations. And we really think that

we would like to keep the people who have taken the time and trouble to learn the job in their place with a decent salary where they can pay their mortgages and pay their car payments and not have look to taking other tests to leave to go to other places which depletes us considerably.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you. I have a few questions, I'm sure other Legislators do also; I think some of them I can ask you and then some of them I'd have to ask the Commissioner. I notice -- and I see your union representative back there, Cheryl Felice; hi, Cheryl, how are you? I know that Cheryl has raised this issue a couple of times with me personally about the issue of upgrading the roll of Clerk Typist. What has happened so far; has it gone to Civil Service or anything else, has there been a request?

MS. TAYLOR:

Yes, it was delivered over to the Mary Gordon Building and the Commissioner examined it and she did send it on, its been there since early November in the Civil Service, I think we're item number 32 to be discussed.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Does that go with the -- oh no, that's 66 Executive Orders, that's a little different.

MS. BERINGER:

It's in the Salary and Appeals.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

It's not one of those, okay. Do you have something to say?

MS. TAYLOR:

The request is in to the Salary and Appeals Board; I'm not sure that that's Civil Service.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. Is the Clerk Typist position, it's a Civil Service position, right, you have to pass a test?

MS. TAYLOR:

That's correct.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. And then -- yeah, come on up, Cheryl.

MS. TAYLOR:

Right now we're a Grade 9, we're trying to become a Grade 11.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Right, which means -- a Grade 9, what is the salary from start to --

MS. TAYLOR:

The salary right now, because of the union contract last year, we -- I originally started a year ago and I started at the S salary which was I think 941 or nine hundred and something a month.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

I would like an annualized salary if we have it; do you have that Cheryl?

MS. FAY:

I started at 21,000 five years ago, so I believe it is now 27 because --

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Starting pay?

MS. FAY:

Yes, because they got rid of the S step.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. So you start at 27 and what is the high point, what can you make in that job, what's the -- you know, there's a minimum and a maximum? Top step.

MS. TAYLOR:

No, that is the salary.

MS. FAY:

Not a whole lot more.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Well, we'll get it from somebody, that's okay.

MS. FELICE:

Mr. Chair?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Yes?

MS. FELICE:

I don't have the copy of the contract with me to know for certain, but what I'd like to point out -- first of all, I'd like to thank yourself and the Legislators for allowing this group the opportunity to be here, and I think it's just a small example of the type of membership that we do have in AME and the kind of employees we have in Suffolk County. They were extremely nervous and were not sure of the process and they did a marvelous job, and that's just indicative of the kind of work they do and the services they do out at Family & Children Services.

Keep in mind, this particular group, along with the Caseworkers and the Senior Caseworkers, deal with, as you know, the most horrific cases in Suffolk County. These families and children are severely abused, severely malnourished and severely neglected and these are the people who take the time to see to write those wrongs. So what you have here is also an example of what happens even with the caseworkers where you have an extremely high turnover rate because of the type of work these people do. You have a lot of case workers that also leave this division for Probation because Probation actually is an easier job. They have -- they are issued weapons, there's a two grade increase in the salary and Probation also has the advantage of having Probation Assistants and Probation Investigators to assist the case workers. And I think what you're seeing here is that the clerical in this particular division has risen to a level where they exceed that of the every day clerical support staff where they are actually support staff to these case workers.

And the process that they are in right now, this group came together because they're in the clerical series. The salary appeals process in the contract says that if an upgrade goes in for a particular title it affects everyone throughout the County. So that's where the Commissioner was correct to say she could not support this in its form because what she would have been signing on to was that she supported a clerical upgrade for every single department.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Uh-huh.

MS. FELICE:

So to part it out to say, okay, we have to step back a little bit to say perhaps this particular group is unique and does need further investigation. And I will say that this kind of fast tracked and didn't necessarily rise to the level of your forum today. And as we talk to the members outside the office before we came in here today, what we wanted to do -- what we decided the goal of today would be is to create an awareness. And the process through Civil Service will take it's course, we'll give them all the support we can, we will work with the department on this. And then when and if we get the successful upgrade and perhaps job change which, of course, would need your support, you would have already had the background.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Basically you're going to look for a different title designation then, right?

MS. FELICE:

It appears that that's the case --

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

In other words, it wouldn't be --

MS. FELICE:

-- that this group has proven.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

-- a Clerk Typist, it would be because your job is so unique and not really matched, the job description that is given, if I'm understanding correctly, that there's an appeal for a different --

MS. FELICE:

Correct.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

-- job and that it would be at whatever, a Grade 11.

MS. TAYLOR:

For example, Family & Children Services, Clerk Typist.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Right, but give it a different name.

MS. FELICE:

And we did have conversations early on -- as I had with you, Paul -- with Civil Service because when we came into office in July we did notice that even overall, you know, including this title, a lot of the titles in the county are antiquated and they do need to be changed and revised and perhaps grouped together.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Right.

MS. FELICE:

And we have been in conversation with Civil Service over that, we have recommissioned the Civil Service Review Committee within AME and that group is going over those titles for consolidation and recommendation to Civil Service. So the process is ongoing.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Well, you know, I can't speak for every Legislator but I think that the Legislative Branch, and especially this committee, would be very sensitive to those issues and when getting the proper information and everything else would probably be more out to be an advocate on maybe the other side of the street. So we'll be glad to work with you and, you know, help in any way.

I just have one or two other quick questions and I know other Legislators do. One would be high turnover, you talked about the turnover rates. You know, Janet, Commissioner DeMarzo, is that something that you might be able to address later or when I bring you up?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. And then the -- the only other thing I wanted to say, I'm assuming there are some other representing Clerk Typists from DSS, are there people in the audience also? Just raise your

hands, if you don't mind. My sense is that you're all doing this on your own time and I think that that should be addressed and understood, that they're not utilizing County time, they took their own private and personnel time to be here today to advocate for themselves and for their coworkers..

MS. FELICE:

That's how passionate they feel about the issue, you're absolutely right.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Well, you know, you should be commended for that. And I thank you for the opportunity of helping to educate this committee, so thank you. Any other questions? Legislator Nowick and then --

LEG. NOWICK:

Yeah, I wanted to thank you also for coming down here and apprising us of this. Besides it being very important, the work you do is very, very important and the hours that you put in and obviously the time that you spend, I know that it's also important to point out that the Commissioner once told us last year when I was sitting on this committee is that when there's turnover like that, what happens is every time a new person comes in that person has to be trained and every time that person has to be trained the public suffers for that. And so that it's -- we understand what you, what the ladies do, and I don't know if there are any gentlemen in the position, but thank you for bringing it to our attention. How many positions would there -- would be involved here?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Approximately.

MS. TAYLOR:

It's approximately in Foster Care and CPS 26 Clerk Typists and 14 Senior Clerks.

LEG. NOWICK:

Twenty-six, 36, 40; that was good, I did the math, pretty good.

Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you. Anyone else? Legislator?

LEG. MONTANO:

Actually, Legislator Nowick asked the question I was going to ask, but a follow-up question. You indicated that there was a pay differential between one grade to the other and I didn't get a clear indication of what the figure was with respect to the pay differential. And by the way, good morning, Cheryl.

MS. FELICE:

Good morning.

LEG. MONTANO:

How are you?

MS. FELICE:

Good, very good, thank you. Peggy, do you have that information? I don't have it in front of me.

MS. BERINGER:

I do have it.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

You have a chart, right?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

We have the chart.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BARNES:

It's 27,170.

MS. FELICE:

Twenty-seven thousand.

LEG. MONTANO:

From 25,000, or more or less 25,000?

MS. FELICE:

Twenty-seven, and then what's the top end?

LEG. MONTANO:

Right, that's essentially the question, what's the difference between entry-level, Grade 9 and Grade 11?

MS. BERINGER:

I do have that answer.

LEG. MONTANO:

Approximately.

MS. BERINGER:

I did some multiplying; the highest grade I have would be 37,830 in twelve years.

MS. FELICE:

That's correct.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

That's Grade 9.

MS. FELICE:

That's for a Grade 9; starts at 27, tops out at 37 but over twelve years.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Right.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

And Grade 11 would be?

MS. FELICE:

And Grade 11 starts out at 29,300 and taps out at 41 over twelve years.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

If we're going to be broke in the bank on that, I mean, shame on us.

LEG. MONTANO:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Yeah, thank you.

MS. FELICE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Legislator Schneiderman?

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Cheryl, don't go away yet. Good morning.

MS. FELICE:

Good morning.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

It seemed from the description that the title that they're currently working in is not a proper title. You talked a little bit about creating a new title, but is there a title that currently exists that would be more similar to the work that they're doing, Cheryl, do you know?

MS. FELICE:

Not to my knowledge. And my reference back to the Probation Department was that they have additional titles in addition to their clerical titles, one is a Probation Assistant, one is a Probation Investigator and those people work directly with the Probation Officer who in this case would be the Caseworkers and the Senior Caseworkers. So perhaps there's something that we could put in the middle of the clerical titles, if not upgrading all the clerical titles to something that would be more accommodating.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Like Clerk Typist/Caseworker.

MS. FELICE:

You know, or just in DSS in Family Services.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Where I was really going --

MS. FELICE:

Family & Children Services.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

-- with this is the possibility of a request being made for out of title pay if these individuals are actually doing work that's outside their title.

MS. FELICE:

There's no provision in the collective bargaining agreement for that.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Oh, no? Okay.

MS. FELICE:

No. But if you would like to, you know, suggest that, we certainly would be open to that. The Commissioner is cringing over here now.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'm sure.

MS. FELICE:

But no, there are no provisions for that at this point.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay.

MS. FELICE:

Okay? But thank you very much for asking.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

I know on the town level we did have provisions for out of title pay; I guess that's --

MS. FELICE:

You had a lot of good ideas out in East Hampton.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Thank you; thanks.

MS. FELICE:

We need to talk more.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay, you got it.

MS. FELICE:

Okay. Thank you very much. We appreciate your time. And they did do a wonderful job, they're a great bunch of people, they really are.

MS. FAY:

Thank you very much.

MS. TAYLOR:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you. And really, what a professional presentation. So thank you very much.

MS. BERINGER:

Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

We have one more card and then we will have the Commissioner of Social Services come up,

and if the Commissioner of Health has any issues to address, the Acting Commissioner of Health, any issues to address. Michael? Is there a Michael? Hi, Michael, how are you? Michael, I love your haircut, I want you to know. You are one handsome looking dude.

MR. STOLTZ:

We have the same barber, I think it's Norelco.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you.

MR. STOLTZ:

Good morning, everybody, and welcome to those of you who are new members of this committee. I want to introduce myself, I'm Michael Stoltz, my full-time position is Executive Director of Clubhouse of Suffolk, a psychiatric rehabilitation agency in Ronkonkoma in Riverhead, but I'm here today to talk to you as co-chair of the Suffolk Coalition of Mental Health Providers.

I co-chair that along with Anita Fleishmann of Pedersen-Krag Center which serves people in the Towns of Huntington and Smithtown. And we're a coalition of 16 non-profit agencies that serve approximately 40,000 Suffolk County residents each year, including children, adults, seniors, families whose lives are affected by mental health issues and serious mental illnesses and psychiatric disabilities. We employ better than 3,000 people and that does not include the large number of volunteers who help our agencies every day.

Our members have met with you, many of you in your office over the past eight or nine months just to introduce our new coalition, to tell you about what we do. And as we communicated to you at that time and I will communicate on behalf of the coalition, we provide services in every one of your districts and we're more than happy to be available to you in your work and we have been individually as well as provide information and comment to you as a coalition to you collectively. So any way that we can be of help to you, please feel free to call on us.

We work regularly with the Division of Community Mental Health Systems, Community Mental Health services which is within the Department of Health. We work with them hand in hand on clinical, case management, rehabilitation and self-help issues, mostly with regard to the use of State and Federal resources with the objective of reducing barriers to critical services for our most fragile people with mental health issues, to ensure the quality and to maximize the efficiency of every dollar that comes into our County.

I'm here today, though, I wanted to just apprise you, and some of you we have met with, but apprise you of kind of a current crisis that we're dealing with that affects approximately 2,000 people in Suffolk County who are living in adult homes. We have written to many of you about this, this is mostly a State issue and most of our meetings on this have been with members of our State Delegation, but we wanted to apprise you because it does affect many of our residents within many of your districts as well.

Whether you know it or not, Suffolk County is the largest provider, the largest municipality with the largest number of adult homes which are licensed facilities through the State Department of Health in the State, and that includes each of the municipalities of the city that provides home to almost -- over 3,000 people in these adult homes, I believe the number is around 3,500; better than 2,000 of the residents of these adult homes are people who have serious mental illnesses. And many of our agencies provide support and treatment services to many of these people.

Over the past about eleven -- I'm sorry, over the past year, eleven of our adult homes, eleven adult homes which are mainly privately owned and, as I said, licensed by the State Department of Health, have closed or have submitted their closing plans. It immediately affects and has affected about 500, again, of our most fragile people who do not qualify for adult homes -- I'm sorry, for nursing facilities, many of them will in the near term but require, you know, an intensive level of care. There are adult homes still closing and the major issue that we are trying to deal with mostly are case management agencies just to try to help them to find alternative housing in this crisis. Some of these homes have been closed abruptly by the State Department of Health, we have had people who have been displaced to other parts of the state often on very short notice, these are very fragile people who want to live and have lived in Suffolk County if not all of their lives, most of their lives. They're connected to local services, connected to local churches and organizations in their community and they're basically being uprooted very quickly.

One of the objectives that we've been working with on this is that basically many of these adult home facilities have deteriorated in Suffolk County, the adult home owners have their own State association and have been seeking and have been in litigation actually with the State trying to get a better daily rate, whether that's the cause of the deteriorating conditions I can't tell you, I'm not an adult home operator. But many of these homes are not in good physical shape, they are providing care that is, at least for our advocacy services for the work that we do with people is marginal, many of them are providing -- for example, administering psychotropic and medical

medications with people who are not well qualified to do that, often getting paid near minimum wage. So one of the objectives of our coalition long-range and short range is to seek the transition of a lot of these adult home facilities to ownership and operation by experienced non-profit operators who can draw down State and Federal resources to be able to physically improve all these homes, or many of these homes, provide better care to the residents.

That's basically what I wanted to tell you about. We have been advocating with our State Delegation, we have been trying to draw down, basically we've had some successes recently. We have gotten a greater proportion of allocated State dollars for congregate care and supportive housing facilities and our agencies are going -- many housing agencies are going through feasibility processes with about four or five of these facilities in Suffolk; there will be another round of bids on that next year with State dollars. It is -- we've also been able to push the State to put forward what's called assisted living dollars into an RFP, they suddenly were able to locate about 170 slots of these which would bring an enhanced rate to adult home. It basically follows the client rather than the adult home but it brings an enhanced rate of dollars so that our more fragile people who otherwise might go into nursing care at a much higher cost to our County because our County picks up a percentage of the Medicaid share, so we might be able to get a larger number of these assisted living slots; we have been able to get a commitment for them for more case management slots as well.

But our work is continuing, we have a long ways to go to stem this crisis and to be able to provide a level of support and to stability to people who have been, you know, as I said, life-long residents of Suffolk or long-term residents of Suffolk County. So that's the extent of what I have to say. If you have questions or -- as I said, we remain as a coalition available to you to provide information about this crisis. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Michael, thank you very much. Just to get a sense, basically what we want to do is -- what you're advocating for is to take it out of private for-profit hands, some of the --

MR. STOLTZ:

Some of it.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

And moving into the not-for-profit where there would be better standards and an opportunity for

allocation of State resources; is that what you're saying?

MR. STOLTZ:

For those homes that are struggling and inevitably are going to close or be closed, we would want to see a transition of them so that they are better facilities physically and in services.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

And this is just in mental -- pardon my ignorance on this, but I know that there are different types of congregate homes that we have in the County. The mental -- I guess mental health centers are a little different than other centers, I mean, is there any mixture or -- in other words, what qualifies someone -- down my block, for example, I have in Huntington right on my road there is a home I think that's basically run by the County, I don't know if it would qualify for mental health services as much as it is I think handicapped services or something. What is -- how does this work?

MR. STOLTZ:

Well, first of all, the County does not run homes and the County has always deferred, wisely so, for the State to oversee, operate and see this, the County does not itself allocate dollars for these poor homes or facilities or housing.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

So these are all State.

MR. STOLTZ:

These are all State oversight and generally State and/or Medicaid money depending on the level of the facility.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Right.

MR. STOLTZ:

Just for reference, our agencies, are coalition agencies are mostly out-patient and community mental health type services. Some of our agencies do provide some housing, but in this process with adult homes we mainly have been working with experienced housing providers generally not among our members --

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Right.

MR. STOLTZ:

-- who we feel could do their job, have the resources to do it properly, have the ability to bring down Federal and State dollars aggressively to be able to improve and enhance these facilities.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Right. And so we would move it out of the hands of for-profit where the standards you think are lax in some situations.

MR. STOLTZ:

Clearly, again, you know, I'm not an adult home operator, I couldn't tell you their plight, but clearly many of them are struggling and their the reasons for closing is that the value of the property that these homes are on is much better than the value of the business.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. Thank you very much. Any other questions? Sure, Legislator Viloría-Fisher and then Legislator Foley.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Hi, Mike. Thanks for coming down.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Minority Leader Foley.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

I just have two questions. You mentioned not-for-profits stepping in, but in the case of a couple of the homes that are closing, isn't it more profitable for them to sell their properties for a profit rather -- I don't know how easy it would be for not-for-profits to step in, it's a good thing but economically do you see them being able to afford to buy these properties that are closing down?

MR. STOLTZ:

Well, what you're looking at doing is a couple of things. You're exactly right, that is the problem, the value of the properties are much more -- are much better than the value of the business. What we want to be able to do is when a non-profit provider comes in there, there are a number of other resources that can happen. So what would probably happen is homes would operate with several different funding streams, some of which may be adult homes, some of which may be assisted living slots as I talked about, some of which may be new housing resources through the Office of Mental Health. So you may be able by having different rates according to what it is that people's functional needs are, you have different rates and now you have a richer pool of dollars to be able to do a better facility. I can tell you housing providers could be a lot better information about how they could make --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

But you're pooling your resources so that a not-for-profit going in would be able to meet the kind of pricing.

MR. STOLTZ:

Well, they're mixing the funding streams rather than relying on one funding stream being the adult home rate.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Now, you spoke about three types of slots, is this what you we referring to?

MR. STOLTZ:

That would be an example, there's a thing called community residence type funding levels, assisted living, that's a funding level through the Department of Health as well as adult homes rates.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

MR. STOLTZ:

Also in there is also agencies that bring down things to the localities that bring tax credits to local businesses. There's a lot of very creative funding streams that make these kinds of initiatives economically positive and beneficial as contrasted with what most people experience with a lot of the adult homes that are deteriorating were they're a blight on the community.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you very much, Mike.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Legislator Foley and then Legislator Losquadro.

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mike, even with the State overseeing these programs there still is an impact with the County Division of Mental Health Services; is that not correct?

MR. STOLTZ:

That's correct.

LEG. FOLEY:

Mr. Chairman, I think it would be worthwhile if for our next committee meeting we could have the Commissioner as well as Tom MacGilvray from Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services to also be here to give us an overview of the problem, because this really -- it's an even greater problem than many of us realize. And part of the problem is the fact -- there was an article in The Times a few Sundays ago where the rates, as Mike had mentioned, are as low as \$28 a day that the State gives adult homes when it can cost anywhere from 51 to upwards of \$60 a day. I think the most succinct way of encapsulating the problem was a quote from an excellent provider in the Patchogue area, he says, "You can't kennel a dog for \$28 a day."

So what's happened for many of these folks is that these nursing homes or rather adult homes are closing, the New York State Office of Mental health is in a panic and what's happening, they're closing these -- I had one person in my office and he received a call while I was there to try to get 30 people from another adult home that was closing within that week. So what's happened is the State's panicking to try to come up with what's called Enhanced SRO payments, but the fact of the matter is people are going to be lost in the shuffle where people are going to be literally out in the street. The State knew this problem was developing, they knew it was developing for a number of years and now it's gotten to the point where people are being thrown out in the street or close thereto and now they're trying to rush through and come up with these new funding sources which can help but it hasn't -- it's not being done in a logical, let's say,

systemic and rational approach. What it is, they're concerned that -- there's pending lawsuits against the State and that they're trying to short circuit the lawsuits by -- and this is one of the good reasons, by the way, why we should have trial attorneys -- they're trying to short circuit the lawsuits by making some of these changes but it's being done in a helter/skelter fashion. So we have people now who are out of adult homes who aren't getting the services they need and now they're putting together a patchwork, that's not really a way you should go about doing public policy.

So Mr. Chairman, I would ask if we could have Mr. MacGilvray here at the next committee meeting and I think he can give us also to fill in the picture further with what Mr. Stoltz has mentioned today.

MR. STOLTZ:

If I can make one point.

LEG. FOLEY:

Especially when the State decisions are impacting our office of Mental Health as well.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. You can --

MR. STOLTZ:

If I can make one quick point?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Oh, you can make it as long as you'd like but quick is better.

MR. STOLTZ:

Quick I'll do. I know our coalition is keenly aware of any time there is changes of use or things having to do with some of these facilities that they wind up being controversial and passionate within localities and right now agencies that are looking at conversion have at least gotten approval letters to move forward with these kinds of projects are in the feasibility stage right now, so it's a little premature for them to be working with the localities, local boards and the town boards and such. But that is what each agency is going to be doing, they'll be meeting

with every town board member for them to fully understand what the scope of the project is, what the benefit of the project will be, what it will mean economically, what it will mean to the design of the buildings and such as we bring in State and Federal dollars to improve these buildings.

So there is a process going on right now. It's a little premature to have all these the meetings right now until we have actual commitments of dollars backed up by architect's plans and things like that to show what can be done in a community.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you very much. Legislator Losquadro and then Legislator Montano.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Thank you. Having spoken with a provider not within the confines of my district but very close to it, I understand there is a lack of an economy of scale, shall we say, that many of the existing homes who provide these services are -- they have been there a while, they're sort of expanded house type facilities and they really don't have the economy of scale that comes with being able to expand and offer the services to a larger number of residents. And you may only have 20 where it's more cost effective than if you had 40, and that's the problem facing many of them that exist right now. Is that something that your coalition has looked into, that some of the new facilities with any of this grant money would be on a larger scale to make it more cost effective?

MR. STOLTZ:

No, actually a lot of the projects that -- again, our coalition is kind of a facilitator in this process, we're not operators and we're deferring, we're trying to bring operators together to be able to look at the feasibility of it. I can say just informally most of the projects that people are looking at are reducing the size of a lot of these homes because structurally to do them right and with the proper guidelines to do them right they need to be redesigned and it's usually fewer people in the facilities.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

What would be an average size of one of the facilities, how many residents?

MR. STOLTZ:

You know, there's different kinds of housing so --

LEG. LINDSAY:

Right.

MR. STOLTZ:

Some of the adult homes that are there right now go between say 20 and 22 and 150.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Okay.

MR. STOLTZ:

So those are some of the facilities that are operated right now; every one would be unique in terms of its structures to what could be done with it.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Thank you.

LEG. MONTANO:

Good morning. I believe you said earlier that in the past year eleven homes have closed; am I accurate in that assumption?

MR. STOLTZ:

They're either closed or they're in the process of closing.

LEG. MONTANO:

And do you know how many people are effected by these closures in the last year, more or less?

MR. STOLTZ:

In the last year it's about 300 people with mental illness and there is talk of two or three more homes closing or submitting their closing plans to the State Department of Health and that would effect another 200 people with serious mental illnesses.

LEG. MONTANO:

You're talking about 500 people this past year, more or less?

MR. STOLTZ:

That's correct.

LEG. MONTANO:

Let me ask you this. Legislator Foley was alluding to it earlier, I'm just trying to get an idea of once these houses close, where are the residents going? I mean, what -- are you tracking at some level where the displacement results or how it results in terms of the burden on the County, other services, Social Services, you have an idea of that?

MR. STOLTZ:

I can give you an idea. Our coalition, one of the things that we've accomplished is to be able to make sure that there would be an ongoing dialogue between the agencies that provide the services, the locality meaning our division, the State Office of Mental Health and the State Department of Health to be able to track exactly that. So we have been asking the State Department of Health to give us a detailed -- they are ultimately responsible for these homes and the residents in them. So we have been asking the State Department of Health to give us a detailed list of summary of where it is that people have gone. Our estimation is the majority have stayed in Suffolk County, have moved to other adult home facilities.

Our worry and concern is, however, that as these things have happened, especially when they've happened in crisis, is that people are falling through the cracks, sometimes perhaps coming into our Emergency Housing System, that's been an issue that Commissioner DeMarzo and our providers and the division have been talking about and wanting to be able to track to see if that ultimately does happen for some of these former residents, and a percentage have gone to other counties.

You should know for that, and the Commissioner provided us some information on that, is that if a person is on Suffolk Medicaid and goes to Queens or Westchester or Rockland County or Rochester and some of the places that people have been displaced to, Suffolk County continues to pay their Medicaid share no matter where they live.

LEG. MONTANO:

Maybe you said this earlier and forgive me if you have; approximately how many of these homes

exist in Suffolk County?

MR. STOLTZ:

As of a year ago there were 64, so now there's about 55.

LEG. MONTANO:

And I would imagine that someplace you have an indication of where these homes are located in terms of geographically.

MR. STOLTZ:

They're in all of your districts, yes.

LEG. MONTANO:

All right. I would like to look at that at some point. Thanks a lot, I appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay, thanks. Anybody else? Thank you very much. Have a good day, sir. Okay.

Commissioner DeMarzo, do you have anything on the agenda? I know there are a few Legislators who wanted to ask some questions also. Okay, thank you. How are you today?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Very good, thank you. I actually wanted to speak on a request for a Certificate of Necessity I have submitted to the County Exec's Office as well as touch upon the Clerk Typists and a little bit on the adult home, if you would indulge me on that.

I would just start with the Clerk Typists and say that I'm supportive of their situation. As they explained and as all of you know, Family & Children Services is one of the units where there is emotional as well as workload issues that really effect the individual in their course of work. And we have gone, not only as a department but as a County, through significant changes in the way that we use data -- we don't use typewriters anymore, we use word processors, we use computers, it's evolved and we really are seeing a lot of people who are Clerk Typists required to use a lot of sophisticated databases.

In Family & Children Services, our system is run on a combination of local and State systems, they do a lot. And because of this and the changes not only in that division but a number of

divisions lasts year, I requested the Suffolk County Department of Civil Service to come in and do a classification study of the department. In September I wrote to Mr. Schneider and said that pretty much that our department had gone through a major reorganization after early retirement, Federal and State requirements had changed, that we had a lot of regulatory responsibilities that filtered even down to the Clerk level and that we would like a classification study of the job titles in the department. Civil Service began that in the latter part of 2003, has been in and looking at all the different titles in our department and our job functions, everybody fills out a survey indicating what they do and they look at that relative to the existing Civil Service titles and decide whether or not it's an appropriate title for that job function; if not, there should be a new job function if it should be reclassified to another position.

The Department of Health had undergone a comprehensive review about -- well, a few years ago and according to Mr. Schneider, it's something that occurs with large departments, you know, he would like I believe every ten years or so, but the last time it was done in the Department of Social Services was in 1986 to the '87 year, so we were long due with all the changes to be looked at.

So I am supportive and I think that as part of the process I was hoping for, I know there are other avenues open to them, going straight Clerk typist has a major ripple effect and I'm not quite sure that it fits every Clerk Typist with the responsibilities they have. That's essentially where I stand on that position and, you know, just want to confirm that we support their request to be looked at to see if they're doing functions that are above and beyond or distinct from a Clerk Typist assignment.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Mr. Chair, may we ask questions on this topic before the Commissioner moves to the next one?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Is that okay, Janet?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Yes.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, just as you touch on them because I had some questions as the people were speaking

earlier. So you're saying that Allan Schneider is already conducting let's say a desk audit to see what the job really entails, is he at that point yet?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

No. Actually it's a classification study for the whole department, Family & Children Services has not been locked at yet, so that will be done. So essentially it's a desk audit for almost every single title and position in the Department of Social Services so it will be quite lengthy, it will be probably over a year in duration.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

So he's not fast-tracking this because of the issues that have been brought forward by the Clerk Typists?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Actually, until today I think that the whole issue of going for an upgrade has evolved and I think it's appropriate into a new title discussion because as you also know, I did not support outright their request to upgrade the Clerk Typist position.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

And I agree with you and I want to discuss something that we spoke about when I was Chair of this committee. We had spoken of the complexity of many of the titles in your department and there is some training involved in your department at different levels for different positions.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Absolutely.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Is there any kind of pay increment when people have gone through in-service training? The people who were speaking with us earlier mentioned that they had had training in a number of different computer programs, that they were also able to teach a mentor new staff that they had specialized training in the State database which I know is important in networking and configuring what's going on in the department. Do we have any room in our contractual agreements for pay increments when people have gone through training?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Not to my knowledge.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. And that's not something that's being looked at by Allan Schneider or by anyone, do you know?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Actually, I guess it would be really a contract negotiation process which would really be labor relations, but no, not to my knowledge.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. All right, so what we're looking at then is as a new title probably here, rather -- because I agree with you, I think if the desk audit were to show when they get to this part of the study that, in fact, what the job entails is a lot more than just being a Clerk Typist which is an antiquated -- really it's an acronymic at this point because everyone does work on word processor, you're not typing anymore. So I suppose with that desk audit or revision it would be -- it would have a new title and the title might be an assistant to a caseworker or some other type -- a new exam would have to then be created, wouldn't it?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Yes. I mean, Traci Barnes is here and she can actually speak to some of the issues. I mean, sometimes when you -- the goal doesn't always have the exact desired effect because what happens is that if you're in a position as a Clerk Typist and a new title is created, you are put in that provisionally until -- I mean, the whole step to creating a new title would have to come before the Legislature, you can't modify the Salary and Classification Plan without a vote of the Legislature, so that would come to you before it even could be implemented in Suffolk County. And then you have to understand that the individuals would be subject to a test and they could serve in there provisionally until such time there was a test and then they could be appointed competitively. But I think it's twice you get a chance if you're in a reclassified position to be reachable on the list and then, you know, there are complications, so it does -- it changes the whole dynamics to who gets into the system in the first instance.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

They wouldn't be taking it promotionally because it's a different title?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

That would be my understanding, yes.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. I have another question. We've spoken many times here in this committee regarding the drain from the Department of Social Services, particularly to Probation. Is Civil Service looking at aligning the salary, the salaries between Probation and the Department of Social Services so that you're not losing --

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

I'm going to ask, if you don't mind, Traci Barnes to come up because she's looked at this, she does a lot of the personnel issues in the Department of Social Services. And I know it has -- I believe it's something that is either pending with Salary and Appeals or been considered.

ASST. COMMISSIONER BARNES:

The classification survey in the whole process compares titles throughout the County. So are they identifying specifically those from Probation because of the flight? Not necessarily, but they are considered as they compare all the titles in the County.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you. Those were all the questions I had. Thank you,
Mr. Chair.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Just one question. If a new title is created, there obviously has some minimum qualifications for that title. I guess my concern is because these people who are meeting the minimum qualifications for the Clerk Typist position, now if a new title is created that involves caseworker, you know, overseeing these cases, that I would like to ensure that these individuals will qualify and meet the minimum qualifications, I guess that would take some review to make sure that the training required for somebody who's involved in case work or overseeing casework, whatever that educational experience background is available to these people.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Yeah. Go ahead.

ASST. COMMISSIONER BARNES:

That is a downside to the classification study overall. Whether it's a new title created or just a review of their duties, they could say that this Clerk Typist is doing a work of let's say a Caseworker and that Clerk Typist might not necessarily be qualified for that. But what happens is that position is then earmarked, so the incumbent is not without a job until such time that that position becomes vacant again and when it does it would be filled at the new title. So they wouldn't be displaced but they might not necessarily benefit.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

But we also think that it's kind of a unique situation and that it would be our goal because we know that this level of qualification can meet that standard, it would be our goal as a department to advocate for similar type standards not to create, you know, qualifications of the people that are already doing the job wouldn't be able to obtain. And it's un -- you know, it is not real case work services that they're providing, they're really providing the support to the casework so they don't do real -- you know, while they do phone interaction they don't really do on-site case work services. So it would be our goal to be supportive of the people that are already in the position and to try to protect the level of qualifications and give them the opportunity to stay.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Thank you.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

I'm sorry, I had forgotten one more question. Mr. Chair, if I may.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Sure, go ahead.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

The term double-team was used, can you just explain what that means; does that mean that they're working overtime?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

No. What they were referring to is that within Family & Children Services there's teams, sometimes it's geographical teams for investigations like we cover Bay Shore, you know, like they'll cover South Shore Community and then there will be another team that covers another geographical area. What they're saying is they're covering for two teams of investigators.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. Janet, you had other issue, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Yeah, I just want to say on adult homes that it is a significant issue. I do think that, you know, it's something that the association Mr. Stoltz works for has been working very hard on, it is an area of concern for the Department of Social Services, not only from the Medicaid standpoint because they are people that we will continue to provide coverage for throughout their life but also from the perspective of homelessness and the support services for this population. I mean, adult home individuals, you know, a number of them have mental health problems and sometimes there's not the systems available when they get into emergency housing realm that really are essential for these people. So it is of concern to us that we work together to try to provide the alternatives and that the association has done a lot of good work in trying to pool these resources of Federal funding and State funding streams to try to maintain these adult homes. You know, at a recent meeting one of realities was that while it's a State involved system, they're all privately owned and that these people have the right to sell their businesses which was a real wake up call to me because I thought government could really do something. But, you know, I know think that the coalition deserves a lot of credit and the Division of Mental Health, but it is something that, as I say, it's a snowball running down on us that we really should try to be prepared to deal with.

The final issue I wanted to discuss --

LEG. FOLEY:

Mr. Chairman? Mr. Chairman, just on that point, if I may?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Sure.

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you. Commissioner, with the Federal -- expected or anticipated Federal and State dollars coming to address, partially address the problem, is there still a local County component as far as dollars?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Well, you know, as you are aware, a lot of these recipients --

LEG. FOLEY:

It will be your -- your department would be involved just more from a Medicaid portion or would you be involved in any other portion?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

No.

LEG. FOLEY:

It's more of a Health Department.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

More of a Health Department, mine is really just actually, the people that fall out of the system sometimes as opposed to those who, you know, are served in that facility.

LEG. FOLEY:

What would still be a County component, even with Federal or State enhanced dollars?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

I'm not confident -- I mean, there are different -- as Mr. Stoltz said, there's different combinations of funding streams, there's a number of homes that they have put proposals forth to try to do some conversion and there's a variety of State funding streams. I'm not confident of what the local share is on these, I haven't actually seen anything that says local beyond some -- because what their -- my understanding is is that these are construction dollars in the first instance and there's always operating dollars that need to follow them, and I think that's more where the local dollars would be.

LEG. FOLEY:

May I follow up on that question, Mr. Chair?

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Sure.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

We suffered through the long-term care and nursing home issues where we had backlogs. Will the breaking down of these homes and trying to track where people are and reenrolling them in programs, will that create a burden to the County in qualifying people, enrolling them; Do you anticipate any kind of administrative burden?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Not directly to the Department of Social Services once again. I mean, the Medicaid eligibility -- a number of these people are long-term Medicaid eligibility, some may even be a hundred percent State charges because they were released from State facilities, so that aspect is not going to have a significant impact on the department. We really are the safety net to the system, when the adult home closes, somebody moves into a single-room occupancy, doesn't -- is not successful in that setting and ends up in emergency housing. So we don't have a direct role. I think that, you know, I will be here next month when.

Mr. MacGilvray speaks, but it really is in the first instance theirs and what their role is with these people, I couldn't speak to.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

The last subject I wanted to address was we have requested from the County Executive a Certificate of Necessary for next week's meeting and in an effort to try to expedite contracts for grants, we are requesting the CN to appropriate a hundred percent Federal funding for a program that I know that many of you are aware of. It's the VINES Program which is in two --

three school districts, Violence Is No Effective Solution whereby the County, through Family Service League, works with three high schools to work with children in jeopardy of placement of PINS or JD; it's been a good program, we're in three high schools. The State advised us in December -- I'm going to -- my dates might be slightly off -- of a grant for an additional funding for this initiative which would run till June 30th of this year. So we got approval in mid February of a reduced amount, we revised our agreement with the state, we are in a position now to get this so we are bringing it to you because the State told us in December we had money to spend by June 30th, we didn't want to away money but we realized that it makes the process very difficult for you because we come in mid cycle to say I'd like, you know, special approve for \$100,000 which would provide William Floyd and Riverhead School Districts with monies to service their middle schools with this initiative where Family Service League is in the school and works with the children with counseling and support services. It's 100% Federal funding that's passed through the State, we would like you to consider it as a Certificate of Necessity in the Executive's Office next week. I will get you the background, I just -- I've always felt that it's helpful to at least make awareness of this. The County Executive is reviewing it right now.

LEG. MONTANO:

Question.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Yes. Thank you.

LEG. MONTANO:

Thank you, Vivian. Before I get to that question, you said William Floyd and Riverhead; what's the third school district?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

The third school district that we're in their high school is Bay Shore. Bay Shore, under the tight time frame, was not, you know, going to participate in moving it down to the middle school; if we continue this initiative beyond June 30th we'll again open that discussion with Bay Shore.

LEG. MONTANO:

This is a joint question; how are the school districts selected, what was the process in terms of identifying where the dollars would go?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

The VINES Program has been in existence for a number of years.

LEG. MONTANO:

Which program is this, I'm sorry?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

The VINES Program, Violence Is No Effective Solution.

LEG. MONTANO:

Right.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Originally it was cooperative with Probation, I'm going to guess a little bit, it had a lot to do with who was interested and it had a lot to do with where a number of our Persons In Need of Supervision came from, which school districts made the most referrals. When you look at -- and Probation has a wonderful chart. When you look at the number of PINS referrals in the County and you code them from like white to red, there's a lot -- there's only a few school districts that pop up red. I don't know exactly, I'm not going to say it's these three but that's part of the decision making where the need was the greatest.

LEG. MONTANO:

Is it fair to say that the schools probably initiated the process in terms of the grant money?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

I'm not confident of that.

LEG. MONTANO:

Okay; I didn't know if you would be confident of that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay, thank you. All right, any other questions? Thank you. Thank you very much.

Do you have anything you want to bring up? Thanks very much, Doctor.

ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:

The only comment I have to make today is just to tell you that I support all of the resolutions that are on the agenda including the Sense Resolution.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Great. Thank you so much. Thank you, Doctor. Okay, let's go to the agenda.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

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1110-04 - Appointing Thomas Ockers to the Suffolk County Health Facilities Commission (Foley). Legislator Foley, you want to make a motion?

LEG. FOLEY:

Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

I'll second it.

LEG. FOLEY:

Motion to approve. Mr. Ockers is not here today, he's been here many times in the past, we're very familiar with him and his background. If need be, we can certainly have him available for the night meeting next Tuesday, but he is no stranger to us and has been a great supporter of our health center system as well as our community college.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

I concur with you. Usually we would like when we make appointments to have the person come. Maybe the day of the meeting --

LEG. FOLEY:

The night meeting, yes.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

-- there's a possibility that he could be there. So I know as a hospital administrator, it's very, very hard to work out a schedule. I'm going to second. I know Mr. Ockers very well, he's an absolutely outstanding community servant, a fantastic hospital administrator, i knew his work

over at St. Francis Hospital and then later at B. So I'll second motion. Legislator Schneiderman, you had a question?

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Just a question because at some of the other committees we haven't been moving forward when the individual was not here, I'm curious if there's a requirement for the individual to be present at the committee.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

I don't think there's a legal requirement.

LEG. FOLEY:

It's not part of the rules.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

As a matter of fact, I know there isn't. And I would say normally that under any other circumstance I would say that I would hold up a resolution but for two reasons; one is that the Suffolk County Health Facilities Commission is something that we're in the process of right now and I don't want to hold up the insight that this volunteer position with having somebody of such high quality, you know, his insight will help a lot. And secondly, just knowing the schedule of a hospital administrator, I mean, you know, they're literally life and death issues that they deal with day.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'll certainly support this based on your recommendation.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you. It is my policy, by the way, a committee chairman, I always uphold the committee chairman's request for one meeting, whether it be, you know, at a meeting or in a committee. But I feel that this is the exception to the rule. Yes, Legislator Losquadro.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

I would just like to put on the record, I would just like to concur, I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Ockers, he gave me a tour of the facilities at Brookhaven Memorial Hospital and he's a

tremendously confident individual and I would just like to express my support for him.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

I think it's a great opportunity for the Suffolk County Health Facilities Commission. Thank you.

LEG. FOLEY:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

All in favor? Opposed? Great. ***Approved (VOTE: 7-0-0-0).***

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

No. 1156-04 - Accepting and appropriating additional 100% State grant funds for contracted agencies in the Division of Community Mental Hygiene Services to cover revenue gaps incurred in the Assertive Community Treatment Program (ACT) (County Executive). Is there a motion.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Motion to approve and place on the consent calendar.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay, second by Legislator Nowick. All in favor? Opposed?

Approved and placed on the consent calendar (Vote: 7-0-0-0).

I love the word 100%.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

1157-04 - Accepting and appropriating 100% grant funds from the New York State Office of Mental Hygiene to the Department of Health Services, Division of Community Mental Hygiene Services, for family Residences and Essential Enterprises (FREE) for

the Single Point of Access Housing Program (County Executive).

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Same motion.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Same motion, same second same vote. ***Approved and placed on the consent calendar (VOTE: 7-0-0-0).***

No. 1158-04 - Accepting and appropriating 100% supplemental Federal grant funds from the New York State Department of Health to the Department of Health Services, Division of Patient Care Services, for the Tuberculosis Targeted Testing and Control Program (County Executive). Same motion, same second, same vote.
Approved and placed on the consent calendar (VOTE: 7-0-0-0).

No. 1160-04 - Accepting and appropriating additional 100% grant funds from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services to the Department of Health Services, Division of Medical/Legal Investigations and Forensic Sciences for the Toxicology Lab Accreditation Program (County Executive). Same motion, same second, same vote.
Approved and placed on the consent calendar (VOTE: 7-0-0-0).

SENSE RESOLUTIONS

Sense Resolution No. 12-2004 - Memorializing Resolution in support of New York State legislation to protect high school athletes who suffer head injury (Caracappa). I'll make a motion to approve. I want to commend the Presiding Officer, I think this is a great idea. Seconded by Legislator Losquadro. All in favor? Opposed? ***Approved (Vote: 7-0-0-0).***

Thank you very much for your time. And thank you to the committee and the Commissioners. Thank you. Motion to adjourn.

(* The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 A.M. *)

***Legislator Paul Tonna, Chairman
Health & Human Services Committee***

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